

**Email received 1/24/2020**

**Support for S.270**

Dear Senators White, Pollina, Bray, Clarkson, and Collamore:

I write to urge you to take up Bill S. 270, which calls for the licensure and regulation of individuals and businesses offering massage therapy.

I reside in Addison County where I serve as Chair of the Board of WomenSafe, a nonprofit organization located in Addison County that works to serve people across the gender spectrum who experience sexual violence, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

Further, I have two personal friends who are survivors of Roger Schmidt's acts of sexual violence and I feel ashamed that we as a state have not done more to prevent the harm that was done to them, nor to offer recourse that offers the fair remedy of knowing others will not suffer their same fate at the hands of the same offender. Though my own personal knowledge of violence perpetrated by massage therapists is limited to this publicly-known case, I know the incidence is much greater than what reaches the public eye, and I agree with the OPR that the prevalence of this type of violence calls for regulation. Per the recent Sunrise Review Addendum, "There are nationwide reports of sexual misconduct perpetrated by massage therapists, and even law firms advertising services for victims of massage therapist sexual assaults. Thus, OPR concludes that the risk of sexual assault, voyeurism, and other inappropriate or criminal sexual conduct by massage therapists is not remote or speculative."

It is important that your committee hear from those who, through this legislation, would be protected by the knowledge that massage therapists who violate codes of conduct appropriate to their work will not be given easy access to future opportunities to be alone in a room with vulnerable clients unaware of the risk they take in disrobing in a treatment room.

I'm grateful to my own Senators, Ruth Hardy and Chris Bray, for their efforts in drafting this legislation, and to all those who signed on as co-sponsors. I hope your committee will consider how important these measures are to the survivors of sexual misconduct, and therefore to future survivors of criminal conduct perpetrated during the course of a form of treatment that should promote healing.

Vermont should take seriously the duty to protect individuals' rights to privacy and freedom from threat of sexual harm, and S.270 offers a path toward that protection.

If you would like to hear more from me about why I believe this bill is in the best interest of Vermonters, I would be happy to offer myself as a witness.

Sincerely,

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Amy Mason